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June 14, 2022

Via Email

Mr. Gabe Albornoz, Council President
And Members of the County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 4th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: June 14th County Council Public Hearing (Zoning Text Amendment 22-02, Density and Height Limits, Parking – Biohealth – the “ZTA”); Stonebridge Letter in Support

Dear Council President Albornoz and Councilmembers:

On behalf of Stonebridge, we offer the following comments in support of revised ZTA 22-02. We will also be providing oral testimony during the County Council’s June 14 public hearing, and we will be available to participate in the anticipated early July PHED Committee worksession during which this ZTA will be discussed. Stonebridge supports the revised ZTA as it will create necessary flexibility to allow for more bioscience development sites to respond to the expanding market demand of prospective bioscience tenants in appropriate urban areas of Montgomery County. This further legislative response to create more zoning flexibility in attracting biotechnology tenants to the County’s urban areas is another critical step for Montgomery County in being a leading national hub serving the biohealth/life sciences sector.

Stonebridge has identified several urban redevelopment opportunities that are desirable for bioscience users, but additional flexibility for density and height are needed to bring these economic development opportunities to fruition in urban areas of the County not previously thought to be attractive to these prospective tenants. The ZTA, as originally introduced, provided comprehensive changes to the Zoning Ordinance to create additional flexibility for a greater range of bioscience projects (including Biohealth Priority Campuses). Upon further analyses, however, it was determined by the ZTA sponsor (and Stonebridge agrees) that the broader objectives of the original ZTA could be addressed in other ways and that the focus of this amended ZTA should be narrowed. As such, the revised ZTA eliminates changes applicable to Biohealth Priority Campuses

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and narrows the scope of development sites eligible for greater flexibility relative to density and building height to urban areas best suited to attract highly desirable biotechnology tenants. More specifically, the revised ZTA includes additional protections to ensure that increased building height is only achieved at development sites that are appropriately separated from single-family residential properties and limits the maximum additional building height achievable for bioscience projects through a multiplier (1.5x) to a maximum of 150 feet of building height. All of these changes result in a ZTA that carefully balances the hugely important economic development opportunities and employment and other ancillary benefits of bioscience projects against high quality urban design standards to ensure compatibility with adjacent development.

The revised ZTA will continue to embrace the Montgomery County Strategic Economic Development Plan (2021-2025, the “Economic Development Plan”). The ZTA is consistent with the Economic Development Plan’s recommendation to “[p]rioritize neighborhood-level land use planning to enhance infrastructure and locations that appeal to life sciences companies,” which in turn will allow the public and private sectors to “[a]ggressively recruit life sciences companies to Montgomery County to increase the density of its biohealth establishments.” *See* pp. 16-17. Given that the revised ZTA creates flexible opportunities for delivery of bioscience projects in the County’s urban core, Stonebridge fully supports the ZTA and looks forward to the opportunity to continue to collaborate with Council staff, M-NCPPC staff, and other public sector partners to implement bioscience projects in urban settings.

Again, we will be present at both the County Council public hearing and the PHED Committee worksession should any of you have any questions or need additional information relative to the desire and intention of Stonebridge to be a major stakeholder in the County’s fast-growing efforts to be a leading destination for the biohealth industry.

Very truly yours,

**Selzer Gurvitch Rabin Wertheimer
& Polott, P.C.**

C. Robert Dalrymple

By: _____
C. Robert Dalrymple

Matthew M. Gordon

By: _____
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cc: Ms. Livhu Ndou
Ms. Cindy Gibson
Doug Firstenberg
Jane Mahaffie
Chris Smith